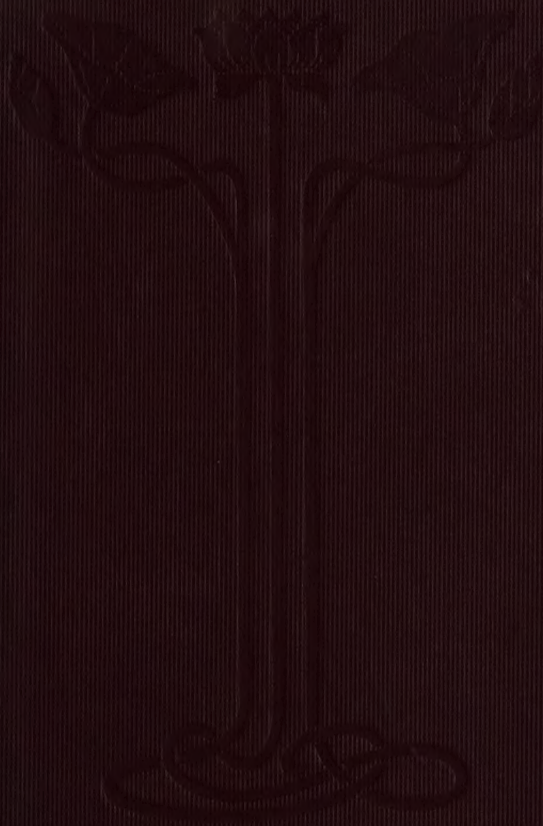
STARS OF THE DESERT



LAURENCE HOPE

To Charles Wish Jr
from Cyril J. Van Rassa
1916

Stars of the Desert

INDIA'S LOVE LYRICS

Collected and arranged in verse by LAURENCE HOPE

LAST POEMS

Translations from The Book of Indian Love by LAURENCE HOPE

SONGS FROM THE GARDEN OF KAMA

By LAURENCE HOPE. Illustrated from photographs by Mrs. Eardley Wilmot. Large Octavo Special Edition

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STARS OF THE DESERT

Mrs. Adela Florence Nicolson

BY

LAURENCE HOPE

AUTHOR OF "INDIA'S LOVE LYRICS" "LAST POEMS"
"SONGS FROM THE GARDEN OF KAMA"

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To Aziz: Song of Mahomed Akram

Your beauty puts a barb into my soul,
Strive as I will it never lets me go.
My love has passed the frontiers of control,
You are so fair and I desire you so.

Others may come and go, they are to me
But changing mirage, transient, untrue,
My faithlessness is but fidelity
Since I am never faithful, but to you.

You are not kind to me, but many are
And all their kindness does not make them dear ;
It may be you deceive me when afar
Even as always you torment me near.

Yet is your beauty so divine a thing,
So irreplaceable, so haunting sweet
Against all reason, I am fain to fling
My life, my youth, myself, beneath your feet.

Surf Song

My little one, come and listen
To the calling of the sea,
And watch how the wet sands glisten
Where the surf has left them free.
As thou and the wind together
Shall frolic along the strand ;
Thy feet as light as a feather
Will hardly dent the sand.

Unwind the veils that enfold thee,
Thou never wast shy with me ;
The sea will rejoice to hold thee,
The stars will delight to see.
The beauty thou shalt discover
Oh, Morning Star of my heart,
Will dazzle even thy lover
Who knows how fair thou art !

Oh, Life, I have taken you for My Lover!

(To Arthur E. J. Legge, who suggested this idea)

Oh, Life, I have taken you for my Lover,
I rent your veils and I found you fair ;
If a fault or failing my eyes discover,
I will not see it ; it is not there !

I know, *if I knew*, I should hold you dearer,
Should understand, *if I understood*,
For I worship more, as you draw me nearer,
Your reckless Evil, your perfect Good.

In the Jungle gloom, we have watched and waited,
For stealthy Panthers, that prowl by night,
At the end of some weary march, belated,
We heard strange tales by the camp-fire light.

We have lain on the starlit sands, untented,
While low-hung planets rose white and fair,
And in moonlit gardens, silver and scented,
Oh, Life, my Lover, how sweet you were!

Forbidden and barbarous rites were shown us,
In rock-hewn Temples and jungle caves,
And the smoke-wreathed home of the dead has known us,—
The burning-ghat by the Ganges waves

Ah, the long, lone ride through the starlit hours,
The long, lone watch on the starlit sea,
And the flame and flush of the morning flowers
When Life, my Lover, was kind to me!

Betimes we were out on the Sea, together;
The vessel raced down the great green slope
Of mountainous waves, in desperate weather;
The hearts of men were adrift from hope.

As over the deck, in exultant fashion,
The violent water crashed and fell,
I knew, through the joy of your reckless passion,
Agonised fear of the last farewell.

But I follow you always, unresisting,
To lowest depth; to uttermost brink,
From a thirst like mine there is no desisting
Though given poison for wine to drink.

You may do your utmost, you will not shake me,
Your faith may falter; my faith is true.
Oh, Life, you may shatter and rend and break me,
All Pain is Pleasure, that springs from you!

In the height and heat of your wildest passion,
You had your uttermost will of me,
And when have I asked for the least compassion?
A lover loved is a lover free!

Though, with never a word of farewell spoken
In lonely wilds of some Desert place,
You have flung me from you, adrift and broken
To wait the child of your last embrace.

And never my faith nor my fervour faltered,
Until you turned to my lips again,
When, my eager longing for you unaltered
Your first kiss cancelled my months of pain.

Ah, Life, you may torture my soul, betray me,
The right is yours, as Lover and Lord.
And when in the climax of all, you slay me,
My lips in dying will seek your sword.

Illusion

THINKING you had a heart that love could break,
A lovely gentle soul that might awake,
I held you tenderly for either's sake,
And showed you nothing but love's ecstasy.

Now, though you have no heart to melt or burn,
No soul to wonder, meditate or yearn,
Your beauty is a fact ; lie still and learn
Something of passionate love's intensity.

Sleep

(The Moorish Slave, at Fidala, Morocco)

THERE is something so beseeching in the attitude of sleep,
A pathetic resignation, most appealing to the heart.
There must surely be some secret that the eyes in slumber keep,
Which the lips, on their awakening, could not, if they would, impart.

See yon Slave from Sus, recumbent, with his ebon arms outspread
On the marigold he crushes to a sheet of golden flowers,
How the mystery of dreaming lends a halo to his head,
And exalts him to a level never reached in waking hours.

In the form that lies impassive, while the sea-wind comes and goes
And uplifts his rags in pity, on its cool refreshing breath,
There is something so prophetic of the Last and Great Repose:
Sleep has borrowed, in its quietude, the Dignity of Death.

Though his parted lips are wordless, though he breathes no uttered prayer
Yet his silence seems imploring "Let me deem the noonday night,
For my dreams are velvet-breasted, and they shelter me from care,
I entreat thee not to wake me to the sorrows of the light."

Ah, sleep on, in peace, my brother, to awaken when thou wilt,
From the dreams that treat thee kindly, and the rest that sets thee free.
With the wild fig for thy canopy, the marigolds thy quilt,
And, to serve thee for a lullaby, the thunder of the Sea.

Song of the Enfifa River

(In Memory of Abdullah, drowned at sixteen, on the road to Rabat, Morocco)

At day-break, when the tide was low
He came to bathe his slender feet,
And laughing, sported to and fro,
Across my waters cool and sweet.

Obedient to his Faith's decree
His sable hair was shorn away,
One curl was left, that floating free,
I longed to deck with silver spray.

His eyes were wide and full of light,
Young eyes, where dreams and fancies glow.
There was no star in Heaven so bright,
And I reflect the stars, and know.

He gave himself to my embrace,
Ah, Youth, confiding and unwise!
My kisses clustered on his face
How should I render up my prize?

Yet he withdrew ; my waves were weak.
He loitered on my banks awhile,
Shook my caresses from his cheek,
And left me with a careless smile.

I let him leave ; my tides were low.
But, seeking succour of the Sea
At noon I felt the breakers flow
Across the bar, and join with me.

I waited in the heat ; at length
Again he came to bathe alone,
Then, in the fulness of my strength,
I caught and held him for my own !

His strong young arms apart he flung,
His red lips cried, I had no care.
In eddies round his limbs I clung,
And rippled in and out his hair.

I bore him downwards to the Sea,
The white surf met us on the sand,
His beauty was made one with me
Who saw and loved it on the land.

I laid him down upon the bar,
Played with his hair, and kissed his eyes.
How cold these mortal lovers are !
He sleeps and makes me no replies.

My tides run low ; he will not wake,
His hand drifts, like an empty shell.
I stole him for his beauty's sake,
Alas, Enfifa did not well !

His young lips show no stir of breath.
Ah,—I begin to understand,
And I remember :—this is Death !
The haunting terror of the land.

The River of Pearls at Fez: Translation

One evening we sat together
By the river of Pearls at Fez,
Stringing verses and sometimes singing.
My gaze followed the beautiful boy
Who, with a swift and delicate movement,
Flung the wine-cup over his shoulder;
The ruby drops glittered and fell
Bright in the dying sunshine.
The River of Pearls shone like a sword in the grass,
Not disdaining
The work of turning the waterwheel,
And the sun, reluctant, lingered about the tree-tops
In a golden mist of farewell.

Many the tears that have fallen since,
Many the nights that have passed,
But I remember
The River of Pearls at Fez
And Seomar whom I loved.

Syed Amir

Syed Amir is dead, and his numerous foes
Are hushed in a breathless awe of amazed relief.
The hearts of his friends are cold as the Tirah snows,
And I am blind and deaf in the Grip of my Grief.
My Soul has borrowed a portion of Pain from Hell.
Oh, Syed Amir, my Brother and Friend, Farewell!

His women weep, but a woman's tears flow lightly.
A bauble or two, or a child, can soon console.
But I, who am strange to tears, lie sleepless, nightly,
Feeling the Fangs of Grief in my desolate soul.
I maddened myself with *Churus*, it could not cure me—
Ransacked the Bazar, to beg at the hands of lust
An hour's respite, but how was sin to allure me,
Who know the beauty of Syed Amir is dust?

A little while I wander in Tribulation,
In a Feud or two, or a few light loves take part,
But Death will come, and this is my Consolation,
Men live not long with a stricken and wounded heart.
What further challenge from Fate can I hope or fear,
Who mourn the ruined glory of Syed Amir?

All gifts were Syed Amir's ; an Arrestive Beauty
That caught men's breath when he passed, Serene and Royal,
A clear and delicate Mind, where Honour and Duty,
Sentried the gate, that nothing might pass disloyal,
And these are taken from Khorassan for ever,
Their light is quenched in the land where he used to dwell,
But I, who loved him, cease from loving him never,
Oh, Syed Amir, my Brother and Friend, Farewell !

Au Salon

A sky intensely blue, a low, white wall
Against it heaps of up-blown yellow sand,
A sleeping figure, holding in her hand
Some scarlet cactus blossom ; that was all.
And yet so mellowly the sunbeams fell
Upon the sunburnt limbs, such subtle play
Of rosy light and tender shadow lay
Upon the upturned face, that all could tell
An artist painted with a poet's eyes ;
And warmly an enthusiastic glow
Ran through the groups that criticised below
While one, who gazed with pleasure and surprise
Said, and I do not think he said amiss,
" He was her lover when he painted this ! "

The Lute Player of Casa Blanca

No others sing as you have sung
Oh, Well Beloved of me!
So glad you are, so lithe and young,
As joyous as the sea,
That dances in the golden rain
The falling sunbeams fling,—
Ah, stoop and kiss me once again
Then take your lute and sing.
Oh, Lute player, my Lute player,
Take up your lute and sing!

The wind comes blowing, light and free:
In all the summer isles
No laughing thing it found to see
As brilliant as your smiles.
You are the very heart of Youth,
The very Soul of Song,
That lovely dream, made living truth,
For which the poets long.
Oh, Lute player, my Lute player,
The very Soul of Song!

Ah, dear and dark-eyed Lute player
This joy is almost pain,
To reach, when evening cools the air,
Your level roof again.
To see the palms, erect and slim,
Against a golden sky,
And hear, as twilight closes dim,
The Mouddin's mournful cry,
Across your songs, my Lute player,
The Faithful's evening cry.

Each slender finger lightly slips,
To its appointed strings,
Ah, the sweet scarlet, parted lips
Of One Beloved, who sings!
Ah, the soft radiance of eyes
By love and music lit!
What need of Heaven beyond the skies
Since here we enter it?
You make my Heaven, my Lute player,
And hold the keys of it!

And when the music waxes strong
I hear the sound of War,
The drums are throbbing in the song,
The clamour and the roar.
The Desert's self is in the strain,
The agony of slaves,
The winds that sigh, as if in pain,
About forgotten graves,
Oh, Lute player, my Lute player,
Those lonely Desert graves!

The sightless sockets, whence the eyes,
Were wrenched or burnt away,
The mangled form that e'er it dies,
Becomes the jackals' prey,
The forced caress, the purchased smile,
Ere youth be yet awake,—
Ah, break your melody awhile
Or else my heart will break!
I sometimes think, my Lute player,
You wish my heart to break!

The sunset fires desert the West,
The stars invade the sky,
Lover of mine, 'tis time to rest
And let the music die.
Though Melody awake the morn,
Yet Love should end the day.
I kiss your hand the strings have worn
And take your lute away.
I kiss your hand, my Lute player,
And take the Lute away.

At twilight on this roof of ours,
So lonely and so high,
We catch the scent of all the flowers
Ascending to the sky.
Sultan of Song, whose burning eyes
Outblaze the stars above,
Forget not, when the sunset dies
You reign as Lord of Love!
Ah, come to me, my Lute player,
Lover, and Lord of Love!

The Hospital on the Shore

The youthful swimmers come up on the beach,
Naked and fresh from the kiss of the sea,
I hear the sound of their light-hearted speech
As it is with them, it was once with me!
Oh, Death, grant me pity: just one day more,
And let me go down again to the shore.

I could have died in the rush of the air,
Mid crashing water and petulant spray,
The surf in my teeth, the wind in my hair,
Rejoicing, exultant, even as they.
But to meet Death here, . . . in this walled-in cage,
I am dumb with terror and blind with rage.

Have pity! Reprieve me! just one more ride,
White sand beneath us, white planets above,
One last long sail with the ebb of the tide,
One lilac evening of delicate love.
One lingering look at those eyes of his.
To remember through the Eternities.

Among the Sandhills

Lie still, Beloved, I also see the day
Shoot his white arrows through the trembling sky,
But what is dawn to us, who cast away
All sense of time that mars our ecstasy?

The scented orange bushes check the breeze
Granting in tribute many waxen stars,
And aromatic Eucalyptus trees
Defy the sun with grey-green scimitars.

Since fate has given us this garden love,
And Time and Space, for once, have acquiesced,
Ah, take no heed of paling skies above
Let us deem night is with us yet, and rest.

Let us lie still and drift away in dreams,
Back to the jewelled kingdom of the night,
Whose golden stars with dimly radiant gleams
Lit up your loveliness for my delight.

Once we are risen all the cares of day
Will seize and bind us to their wanton will.
Why should we own that night has passed away?
Oh, as you value love, lie still, lie still!

The Cactus

THE scarlet flower, with never a sister leaf,
Stemless, springs from the edge of the Cactus-thorn:
Thus from the ragged wounds of desperate grief
A beautiful Thought, perfect and pure, is born.

Lalla Radha and the Churel

His sixteen years had left him very fair,
Tinted his cheeks with soft and delicate bloom,
Added new lustre to his clustered hair,
And filled his amber eyes with tender gloom.

He sought some unknown thing, he knew not what,
His scarce-seen bride, a child, was far away,
Desiring love, as yet he knew it not,
Sleepless by night he grew, forlorn by day.

PRIEST

"Ah, go not near the Peepul trees,
That shiver in the evening breeze,
A young Churel might hide in these!

"And should she see thee, and desire,
Then will she burn thee in soft fire,
Till in her arms thou shalt expire!"

LALLA RADHA

"But who and what is this Churel,
Who loves in Peepul trees to dwell,

The Peepul, where the Koel sings
In frenzied songs, of amorous things?"

PRIEST

"When, with her child unborn, a woman dies,
Her spirit takes the form of a Churel,
A maiden's form, with soft, alluring eyes,
Where promises of future rapture dwell.
Yet is her loveliness, though passing sweet,
Marred by the backward-turning of her feet.

"She sits in branches of the Peepul trees,
Until beneath, a passing youth she sees.
Should she desire him, swift, she will alight,
Entreating softly 'Stay with me to-night!'
No safety then for him; unless he flies,
Soon, in the furnace of her love, he dies!"

LALLA RADHA

"But if indeed these things are so,
Yet what am I, that she should care,
To watch me as I pass below,
Or notice me and find me fair?"

PRIEST

"Yours are the happiest gifts that the Gods have given,
Who have never been over ready with gifts to part.
Youth, the divine reminiscence of some lost Heaven,
Beauty, the dream of the eyes, the desire of the heart.

"Beauty, that women adore and secretly pray for,
To find, to possess, to bequeath to the world again,
The loveliest stake that Life allows them to play for,
At the risk of death; with certain foreknowledge of pain."

DANCING GIRL (*singing in the distance*)

"What will you do with your seventeenth year,
You with the eyes of a dove?
Give it to Love, he will hold you lightly,
Betray you and wound you more than slightly,
But lead you into Paradise nightly,
Give it to Love!!"

He heard and waited awhile, but the days flew by,
And brought a more brilliant sun to the azure sky.

The scent of the flowers grew stronger, grew keen as pain,
And Youth's sweet ferment rose from his heart to his brain

Until, when the west was red, and the evening breeze
Broke fresh on his lips, he went to the Peepul trees.

SONG OF THE CHUREL

"AH, come to me, I want you so!
Why will you make me wait?
The golden sunsets burn and glow,
The twilight moments come and go,
I watch you wander to and fro,
Why do you hesitate?

"So very brief Youth's season is,
Ah, wherefore waste a single night?
Put up your lips for mine to kiss,
Take the first promise of delight.

"Upon Life's pale and tragic face,
Youth passes like a blush.
It blooms, an evanescent grace,
Alas, for such a little space,
And fading, hardly leaves a trace,
Of all its radiant flush.

"We cannot force one night to last,
Or stay a single star at will,
And though the Pulse of Youth is fast,
The Wings of Time are swifter still.

"So much I want your silken hair,
Your youth, intact and free,
A thousand nights, serenely fair,
With scented silence everywhere,
Consenting stars and pliant air,
Would pass too soon for me.

"Too soon the rising flood of morn
Our isle of night would overflow,
And force upon our eyes forlorn
Its lovely but unwanted glow.

"The magic Garden of Delight
Is ours; I hold the key.
Take up Love's sceptre, yours by right
And learn his mystery and might,
Ah, come and reign with me to-night,
In silent ecstasy!

"Come, while the silver stars above
Rain down their light serene and still,
And if you cannot come for love,
Ah, come on any terms you will!"

. . . . .

How should the youth resist, deny,
Or turn his lips from hers away?
Nightly, beneath th' unheeding sky,
The fierce Churel caressed her prey.

Nightly, the flickering Peepul trees,
Echoed his soft and broken sighs,
While the faint eddies of the breeze
In pity fanned his sleepless eyes.

Frailer he grew, more wan and pale,
Possession only fed Desire,
Like wax he felt his forces fail
Consumed in her insistent fire.

Till lost in dreams, his fainting breath
Shed on her lips in one last sigh,
He neither knew nor noticed death.
This is the loveliest way to die!

Beneath the Peepuls dead he lay,
Pale on his face the starlight fell,
In ecstasy he passed away.
Such is the love of the Churel.

Rabat: Morocco

Oh, walled, white City, rising from the plain,
Between the grey-green grass, the grey-blue skies,
How we have longed for you, and watched in vain
Till your pale beauty rose upon our eyes.

From Orange groves, beyond your gated walls,
Faint scents of Citron bloom float far away.
Upon each wind-worn face the perfume falls
Till we forget the journey of the day.

Forget the weary march, its dust and heat,
The frequent carrion that taints the air,
The three-inch spur, the lame and stumbling feet,
The pointed stirrup, clogged with blood and hair.

Forget the wretched brute, that strains and strives,
Staggers a few more paces with his load
Then falls and dies, beneath the open knives,
The kicks and curses of the savage road.

Let us forget (in such forgetfulness
Lies the one chance, perhaps, of life at all!)
While our burnt lips receive the soft caress
Exhaled from Orange flowers beyond the wall.

Ah, sea-set City, grant my heart's request!
Where your slim minarets soar white above
Your fragrant Orange gardens, grant me rest,
And from some child of yours, a little love.
Ah, walled, white City, grant me a little love!

Gathered from Ternina's face

(To N. L. K. in memory of June 23rd)

TRISTAN, Oh, Tristan! Death has set us free!
There is no barrier now, 'twixt me and thee,
For Fate allows my lips their "Come to me"!!
Tristan!

We, from this night, no more of night shall know;
For us, no paling stars, no dawning glow;
Ah, I am more than glad to have it so,
Tristan!

I feared the poison, now I feel it thrill
Through all my veins like liquid fire, and still
It brings no pain, nor any sense of ill,
Tristan!

Only a tender, strange desire for thee,
While the winged moments perish silently.
Ah, come, lest Death forestall thee, come to me,
Tristan!

Most gracious Death, who sets me free to speak;
He strengthens me, who makes all others weak,
Brings blushes and no pallor to my cheek,
Tristan!

Listen ; I say the words I could not say
Had we to rise and meet another day,
But in the falling shades of Death, I may !

Tristan !

There will be no to-morrow ; I shall keep
Tristan for ever in my arms asleep.
Not even dreams will share a rest so deep,

Tristan !

My face will be the last face thou shalt see.
Thy spirit, entering on Eternity,
Will pause to take an ultimate kiss from me,

Tristan !

Ah, come to me, since Death has given the right.
I love thee so, I could have died to-night
Without the poison's aid, from sheer delight,

Tristan !

Much may be done by those about to die,
Much may be said by lips that say "Good-bye,"
On which the Last Great Silence soon must lie,

Tristan !

With Death to shelter me, I greatly dare,
My lips seek things mine eyes have long found fair,
This is thy mouth,—and this, thy falling hair,

Tristan !

Thy falling hair,—so soft upon my brow,
Never a lover has been loved as thou !
If this is Death, I have not lived till now !

Tristan !

Opium: Li's riverside hut at Taku

The room is bare, the paper windows shiver,
Beneath the ill-hung door, the sleet blows free,
Yet here, Delight flows forth, a gentle river,
To saturate my soul with ecstasy!

I lie upon the heated *Kang*, quiescent,
Lulled by the warmth of lighted straw below,
While Li, the golden-tinted adolescent,
Blue-clad and silent, passes to and fro.

Li, with his well-cut lips and supple fingers,
His crudely lidded eyes, that seem to gaze
Back through ten thousand years of thought, where lingers
Some misty splendour of the old, old days.

Free from the plait, his loosened sable tresses
In silken waves, below the knee, descend.
Bringing the opium pipe, he deftly presses
The viscous drug upon the needle's end.

Lights it, inserts it in the pipe beside me,
Then through my lips the magic vapour streams,
And Life and Love, that seldom satisfied me,
Meet me with lovely faces in my dreams.

Life at his brightest, flushed and crowned with flowers,
Brings gifts no mortal, waking, e'er possessed,
Exquisite Chances, and Enchanted Hours,
While Love,—Love brings me you, to share my rest!

In the Water Palace

The gracious rain caressed the fields
To bountiful increase,
Profusion reigned throughout the land,
And, on the borders, peace.

Yet, in the streets, the people cried
"It is a shameful thing,
Now all the Gods are more than kind,
This madness of the King."

A gipsy-girl his heart ensnares,
And all his days and nights
Are spent, unmindful of the State,
In profitless delights.

The Maharani sits alone,
Her lashes wet with tears,
While all the pearls and gems of state
Her gipsy rival wears.

In vain they bring her silken robes,
In vain her maidens sing,
She will but sigh, "When shall I see
The beauty of the king?"

The gipsy's youth is all but o'er,
Her time for children past,
The people say, "Without a son
How shall the kingdom last?"

And louder yet the murmurs grow
Of folly and disgrace,
And faster still the Rani's tears
Flow down her youthful face.

One night, a faithful handmaiden
Unto her chamber came;
"Presence," she said, "'tis thou alone
Canst save the king from shame.

"The gipsy girl we drugged to-night
And stole her silks away,
Rise thou, and play the wanton's part
Until the dawn of day.

"We gave a philtre to the king
To set his brain afire,
And thou shalt take the gipsy's place
To solace his desire.

"Thus lying joyous on thy heart,
If all propitious be,
He, thinking of the gipsy's charms,
Shall bring a son to thee.

"If this, Oh, Rani, thou canst do
Thy virtue will be great;
Thou from himself wilt save the king,
And from the king the state.

"But ah, remember, he must go
Before the skies grow light,
Ere yet the philtre leave his brain
Too clear in sense and sight.

"For should he dream that thou art thou,
And realise the truth
Too suddenly, he would not spare
Thy beauty or thy youth.

"In some auspicious, later hour,
If our desire be gained,
The tender sequence of the fraud
To him can be explained."

The Maharani rose and smiled,
She pushed her hair away,
"Ah, if he stay with me to-night,
At daybreak let him slay!"

Then round her slender neck she twined
The pearls as white as milk;
Her breast was all too young to fill
The crimson bodice silk.

She blushed to wear the gipsy's robes,
And yet they seemed to bring
A subtle sweetness to her soul,
Since well they knew the king.

And "Ah," she said, "I love him so,
I tremble with delight;
Would that I knew the gipsy's spell
To charm him through the night!"

Then to her rival's bower she went,
(Who far, unconscious, lay,)
And waited in a flush of joy
Till he should pass that way.

He came in all his jewelled state,
His dagger by his side,
The philtre filled him with desire
Fierce to be satisfied.

His youth and beauty changed her love
To passion at its best,
And round his neck she wound her arms
And took him to her breast.

She was so sweet, she loved so well,
Before the night was past,
He murmured, "Ah, my gipsy queen,
Thou lovest me at last!"

The watchful woman by the door
Waited in hope and fear,
Praying the Gods that all go well
For her she held so dear.

And when the night had somewhat waned,
And sleep had closed his eyes,
"Presence," she said, "Unclasp thine arms
And bid thy lover rise."

The little Rani held him close
And smiling answered low,
"My lover is so sweet to me
I cannot let him go."

And once again she came to warn;
The Rani begged reprieve,
"Love is so sweet and new to me
How can I let him leave?"

A third time came the handmaiden,
Sleep weighted both their eyes,
The Rani sighed, "I love him so,
I cannot bid him rise!"

Thus all three slept until the dawn
Rose tremulous and clear,
And soon the sunlight through the room
Pierced like a golden spear.

It struck the king across the eyes,
He rose alert and keen,
He saw the pearls he knew so well,
But not his gipsy queen.

The Rani waking, held him still,
He tore her arms apart.
"This for thy treachery," he cried,
And stabbed her to the heart.

The Crucifix

Oh, slender Christ, upon the Cross before me,
Whose wistful eyes are sad and shaped for tears,
What have we done, of all that you commanded ?
Little enough ! these last two thousand years.

Should any soul be touched with grace or glory,
Surely such gifts are their possessor's loss :
Hemlock to Socrates, the stake for Bruno,
And, to your young Divinity, the Cross.

That Cross, on which you hung, serene and dying,
Until the last, to your own tenets true,
Praying amid your long drawn torments, " Father
Forgive them, for they know not what they do."

Forgive, *forgive* us, for our senseless folly,
After these weary centuries, who *can ?*
We, who relinquished priceless consolation,
That else those tender lips had left for Man.

Ours was the cruelty, the wasteful madness,
And ours, alas, th' irrevocable loss,
You touched our anguished world with gentle solace,
And in return, we gave you to the Cross !

Wind o' the Waste: On the Wall of Pekin

The icy wind sweeps over the desolate snows,
Over the Desert of Gobi, towards the sea.
I envy this headless corpse, for it sleeps and knows
No more of our human life and its agony.

He was a robber when living, and scaled the wall
To escape his foes, (Ah, could one escape from love)
They would have flayed him alive had he chanced to fall
Into their hands, so he strangled himself above.

And after awhile the body rotted and fell,
The head still hangs on the nail by the broken stair,
Wherever his soul is now, it has left the Hell
That passion makes for us here of hate and despair.

Alas, this land of cruel and desolate things!
How can the Roses of Happiness come to bloom,
Or that butterfly, Love, flutter his silken wings,
While the bitter wind of the waste lashes the gloom?

Happiness

"NOTHING succeeds as doth succeed Success!"
None who have known Success assent to this.

Have I not kissed beloved, consenting lips,
And through my kisses cursed their sweet consent?
Turning my face towards the desert stars
To pray the chillness of the midnight breeze
Might cool the passion that demanded mine.

And all the Gold, wrenched from the stubborn rock,
The utmost Glory, gathered on the Field,
When have they proved a lure to Happiness?

Happiness is so reticent and shy,
So transient, so illusive, and so young,
Most men but glimpse her through the morning flowers,
Or the faint mirage of a passing dream.

She meets her lovers on the summer seas,
Among the shadows of the quiet hills,
Grants them, perchance, a moment's ecstasy,
Then, ere they realise her, she is gone.

Dreamers of Dreams arrest her wayward steps,
And to the Young her kindest kiss is given.
But none have claimed the maiden for a bride,
Set her obedient by the daily hearth,
Or raised a child of theirs from happiness.

Happiness to Success is as a rose,
Perfumed and dewy, in a nest of leaves,
Is to a carven gem of emerald
Circling a ruby on a golden stem.

Take thou the jewel, Friend, and let me lose
What soul I have, among the Lotus flowers!

The Orange Garden

(Translation from the Moorish by Walter Harris of Tangier)

I

I CANNOT find this Orange Garden fair :
The dim dishevelled grass is wet and chill.
Desolate, croaking frogs distress the air,
But birds, if ever birds come here, are still.

Even the oranges have lost their light
And droop forlorn beneath the sombre green.
A water-wheel creaks somewhere out of sight,
Grey mist and shadow veil the lonely scene.

And when I think I hear your coming feet
Rustle across the grass and violet leaves,
'Tis but the gardener, who fears to meet,
Among the gloom some fruit-attracted thieves.

II

Fair, ah, fair, is the sunny Orange Garden,
Secret and shady, scented and green.
Gold, red gold, are the oranges in clusters,
Fragrant and bright in their ripened sheen.

Even the croaking of the frogs is music,
Even the creak of the wheel is song,
Straight to my naked heart the wild birds' warble
Strikes in cadence, tremulously strong.

Now the old gardener passes discreetly,
Never upraising his guarded eyes,
For here in the violets, at rest, beside me,
Sweet and consenting, my Loved One lies!

Droit du Seigneur

The Aspens shiver by the osier bed,
The waters ripple in September's sun
Among the rushes, where I sit and dream
My basket empty and my work undone.

I watch the spirals of blue smoke arise
Above the green of oak and chestnut tree
Only one week of wistful weariness
Before as custom bids, I go to thee.

But, wilt thou take thy right? My brother's wife
Went to the castle on her wedding-day,
And when thou saw'st her shivering dissent
Didst thou not say in kindness, "Go thy way,

"Untouched by me, even as thou hast come,
Save in the way of gifts; take this and this."
And she, poor little fool, rejoined her mate,
Unharmed, *unhonoured*, even by a kiss.

Last week I saw her at her cottage door
Nursing her clumsy child; no wistful sigh
For what her peasant arms might yet have held,
A child of thine,—broke her serenity.

Ah, if I knew how thou wilt deal with me.
Who knows? who knows? They tell me I am fair,
And any beauty that I may possess
Have I not kept it for thy sake with care?

To guard a pallor that might blush for thee,
Shading the sunrays from this face of mine,
Smoothing my hands with milk from elder-flowers
Lest the rough skin should jar the silk of thine.

Ah, how I loved thee, even as a child
Watching thee ride across the village square,
The curls blown backwards from thy vivid face
Thy pennons lifted on the summer air.

How I have envied brides who passed thy gates,
And when I heard the village gossips say
Thou wert not as thy fathers; oft refused
To claim thy privilege, I turned away

So glad and yet so sad,—it well may be
They will not notice me, those eyes of thine;
Yet surely love will find some soft appeal
To draw their gaze to me, thy lips to mine.

My cousin loves me; in his kindly eyes
Lies the clear promise of a calm content.
, wedding him, ensure his happiness
As thou ensurest mine, shouldst thou consent.

Ah, if thou shouldst be kind and set thy seal
On me and mine for ever. Women know
The secret ways of love and all its lore
If,—Ah, dear God in Heaven, if this were so!

My firstborn should be thine, then all my life
Will, and must, keep the memory of thee.
Even as thou art printed on my heart,
So on my being must thy impress be.

No second lover and no second child
Efface the imprint of the first who came,
And on the golden sands of youth inscribed
Lightly, but so indelibly, his name.

Many a custom, many an old abuse
Thy people cherish still, unknown to thee;
My cousin whispers me among the reeds,
"What has the priest to do with thee and me?

"Let us forestall our marriage, thus thy child
Will be thy husband's, not a lawless thing
Born of injustice." Ah, how blind men are,
How strange their words of careless kindness ring.

It is the sweetest justice or our lives
That once, ere settling to our lifelong task
Of serving boors and raising sons to them
One golden moment, too divine to ask

In our most daring prayers, is flung to us
By our time honoured custom's strange decree,
One perfect hour of radiant romance
Is lent to us ; will it be lent to me ?

Rarely men understand our way of love ;
How that to women in their wedding hours
Lover and priest and king are blent in one,
Hence the awed worship of these hearts of ours.

At times love for a little lifts the veil
And men and women see each other's heart,
But swiftly passion comes, obscuring all,
And thus the nearing souls are swept apart.

To us love is a sacred rite ; to men
Custom, perhaps affection, or desire.
Before we hold our lovers in our arms
They are too fiercely amorous to inquire.

And after too indifferent ; thus our souls
Remain an unread chapter to the end,
And those whose very life is blent with ours
Cannot be called with justice even friend.

Ah me, I dream and dream : my basket lies
Unfilled beside me, while the aspens part
Their trembling leaves, and show the castle walls
That rest my eyes and draw my anxious heart,

Because they hold its treasure. Ah, Seigneur,
So loved, so longed for, passing strange it seems
That I shall speak to thee, to whom I speak
Daily in thought, and nightly through my dreams.

Thou may'st misunderstand. Excess of love
Takes the pale lips of coldness or of art.
And yet my eyes must surely find some way
To show the white heat burning at my heart!

Seigneur, not so dissimilar am I
From thee and thine. Thou know'st thy father's ways,
Ay, and his father's; much the castle blood
Mixed with the village stream in former days.

Signs of more brilliant lineage than my own
Many have marked in me. Take heed of this;
Find me not too unworthy of thine arms;
These lips are thine knowing no other kiss.

Think; if thou givest me an hour's delight
It will be all my life will ever know.
Seigneur, have pity on this love of mine
And lend thyself to me before I go

Back to my narrow life. The whitest star
May let its pure and trembling beauty rest
In the dim silver of the smallest pool;
Wherefore not thou a moment on my breast?

I am thine own by immemorial right,
Stoop thou and take that privilege of thine ;
An hour's dalliance in thy life, Seigneur,
And an eternal memory in mine !

Korean Song

"Ah, paddle not thou afar from shore
Where the Great Stream meets the sea,
The River Pirates will snatch thy gold
And beat out thy life from thee."
"But thine eyes, my Beloved, thine eyes,
Have they no peril for me?"

"Ah, go not down to the dens by night
Where they sell thee poppied dreams,
Like evil eyes, through the spiral smoke,
The lighted opium gleams."
"What of thine eyes, oh, my Beloved,
Have they no alluring beams?"

"Ah, stray not where last year's Lotus stalks
Are gripped in the frozen mere,
The treacherous ice is over thin."
"It is not the ice I fear,
But thine eyes, my Beloved, thine eyes,
So dangerous and so dear!"

Stars of the Desert

(Mahomed Akram's Night Watch)

The night is calm, and all the stars are burning,
Around our camp the sands stretch far away,
No sound, except the lonely jackals howling,
Until the horses, startled, wake and neigh.

Only the walls of one thin tent of canvas,
Only a yard of yellow desert sand,
Between us two, and yet I know you distant,
As though you lived in some far Northern land,

Here, at the doorway of my tent, I linger
To watch in yours the shadow and the light,
The hungry soul within me burning, burning,
As the stars burn throughout the Eastern night.

I know well how you sleep, your head thrown backwards,
Your loose hair ruffled up and disarrayed,
Your fervent eyes still sombre in their slumber
From the dark circle of the lashes' shade.

I listen to your even cadenced breathing,
From the soft curve of parted lips set free;
Only a slender wall of wind-stirred canvas
Between your loveliness asleep and me.

Sleep on, I sit and watch your tent in silence,
White as a sail upon this sandy sea,
And know the Desert's self is not more boundless
Than is the distance 'twixt yourself and me.

Know that I am some low red planet burning.
You in the Zenith, a serene white star,
And I to you, less than the lonely jackals
That howl among the sandy wastes afar.

Sleep on, the Desert sleeps around you, quiet,
Watched by the restless, golden stars above,
Ay, let us sleep; you to your careless waking,
I, with my dreams of unrequited love.

The Fisherman's Bride

The great grey waves, with an angry moan,
Rush in on the patient sand.
The spray from their crests is backwards blown
By the strong wind from the land.

As curls are blown from a maiden's face
And flutter behind her free,
The spindrift blows from the waves that race
From stress of the outer sea.

The restless wind has ever a sigh
And the waves are salt as tears,
Maybe because of the dead who lie
Where never the sunlight peers.

One curl of his hair is more to me
Than a thousand waves of thine,
Yet is his life in thy charge, oh, sea,
And also and therefore mine.

Great sins are written against thy name
In records of olden times.
Art thou not filled with sorrow and shame
Remembering ancient crimes ?

Then spare, oh, spare this lover of mine,
Thou queen of a million ships,
Content thee with that coral of thine
And leave me my lover's lips!

The End

In the past I have craved for many a thing
And ever you answered "No,"
Now I would ask you for one thing more;
For God's sake let me go!

Truly the Greeks were wise who smiled,
Saying, in days gone by,
Love has only the heart of a child
And the wings of a butterfly!

(Ah, for the cabined sampans, floating free,
Ah, for the tropic moonlit nights, that fling
Unnecessary silver on a sea
Itself with phosphorescent light aglow.
Ah, for the waving palms along the shore.)

Craft, long laid up in a dockyard dry,
Wearily yearn to feel
The cool caresses of living water
Pressing against the keel.

A ship remembers the open sky
Anchored in roadstead ease
And all that the wind and waves have taught her
In far-off perilous seas.

Amidst the strife of clamorous speeches
And eager gold-snatching hands,
The soul grows faint for the yellow beaches,
The loneliness of the wind-swept reaches,
And the calm of Eastern lands.
My foot is athrill for the steel of the stirrup,
My palms are astir for the grip of an oar
The whole of my body is sick for the sea
And the peace of a desolate shore.

Perhaps you gave me what you call love,
(I had called it another name)
But anyway, I am tired of playing
Take all the stakes of the sorry game.
I wonder you thought me worth betraying.
But what is there now that is worth the saying
Since the end must be the same ?

I shall piece together my broken youth,
If aught of youth remain,
And when at last the wreck of me reaches,
Beyond the lilt of persuasive speeches,
(I question if ever you spoke the truth)
The palm-tree shade of the coral beeches
The cool retreat of the Cinnamon grove,
Peace will find me again.

For Youth, who sleeps so soundly and so well,
On any couch and under any stars,
Shall join with Rest and weave a magic spell
To soothe the memory of my prison bars.

Serenity shall raise pavilions o'er me,
Freedom and dreams console me with a smile,
Hope, the Eternal Mirage, dance before me,
And Love,—no more of love for me awhile!

I seek, to celebrate my glad release,
The Tents of Silence and the Camp of Peace.

That little island! surf-circled, it waits
On the sapphirine waves for me,
To the right of the fairway through the Straits
As you sail to the China Sea.

A pile built hut and a captive boat,
At the foot of the wavewashed stair afloat,
Blue water abreak upon the beach,
The soft, vague sound of Malayan speech,
Ah, the sun-gilt rest of that island shore,
Mine the folly to strive for more!

I shall go the way of the open sea,
To the lands I knew before you came,
And the cool clean breezes shall blow from me
The memory of your name.

The transient sorrow you cause me now
Will fade away in the distance dim,
But Love is a God, and I wonder how
You will make your peace with him!

The Consolation of Dreams

Farewell, O Sapphire Eyes, serene and clear,
Tender and careless, not the stars above
Could take less heed of one who held them dear
Than you Beloved, who could not, would not, love.

Ah, Sapphire Eyes, who could not, would not, care
Or shed on me their soft indifferent beams,
The long white day may keep you far as fair,
Yet you come very near to me in dreams.

Dreams: when I force you with soft violence
To turn on me their tender azure shine,
And tune your voice to this sweet eloquence
"I am your lover, lend your lips to mine."

"Refuse me not." Ah, when would I refuse?
"Turn here your face." When would I turn away?
I, whose one wish is that you should infuse
Your life in mine in love's completest way.

I, who had held that life had given me all
Had it, oh, if it had but given me you!
Had Fate but ordered your soft light to fall
Across my solitudes, O eyes of blue.

In the Far East the old Religions say
Man rises nearest to the Gods above,
For a brief space becoming even as they,
In the last ecstasy of human love.

Might I not also rise and reach your soul
If once its passionate life had passed to me
In the surrender of your self control,
Th' unguarded moments of your ecstasy?

For though you hold that Love is brief and mortal,
What other way can I attain to you?
I know, O Azure Eyes, no other portal
To reach the mind beyond your mystic blue.

And yet—what use these dear, delusive dreams?
The night wears through, the stars grow pale above,
Farewell, O Sapphires, set in tears, there seems
No hope, no rest, you would not, could not, love.

Men Should be Judged

Men should be judged, not by their tint of skin,
The Gods they serve, the Vintage that they drink,
Nor by the way they fight, or love, or sin,
But by the *quality of thought they think.*

The Island of Desolation: Song of Mohamed Akram

Here on the Island of my Desolation
I look across the wastes of azure sea;
None of the ships that pass in exaltation
Have any cargo or commands for me.

Not in the red of any joyous morning,
Not in the gold of any sunset light,
Will they run up the flag to give me warning
That the so longed-for vessel looms in sight.

Sometimes I light the beacon fires of passion
To lure frail pleasure craft towards the shore,
Join the night revels in half-hearted fashion
Only to wake more lonely than before.

Now and again some friendly soul has landed,
Taken his careless welcome; sailed away,
And in the time of tempest, ships have stranded,
Spilling rich merchandise about the bay.

White bones among the mangroves glisten dimly,
Drift with the water, in the sunshine bleach,
While the gaunt ribs of wreckage rising grimly
Guard the forlornness of the wind-swept beach.

Inland, among the fern and seeding grasses
Where the Acacia, silken-tasselled, waves,
The summer wind sighs softly as it passes
Over the green of half forgotten graves.

Little I heed ; my eyes gaze ever seaward,
Straining to glimpse the ship I never see,
My constant soul, set like a compass, theeward,
Even as thine was always turned from me.

Ah, how I loved thee ! Hoping to forget thee,
Where are the things I did not vainly try ?
But every cell and fibre still regret thee,
Even in death remembrance will not die.

If thou shouldst seek me (though thou comest never,
My hopes, like Lighthouse rays, stream forth to thee)
Thou wouldst still find me faithful, watching ever,
Or buried with my face towards the sea.

A Sea Pink

She came, a maiden from the North,
To dwell among a Southern race,
And lovely Northern eyes looked forth
In azure from her oval face.

Her hair was like the pale faint gold
September's sun sheds o'er the land,
And soft to touch and slim to hold
The white perfection of her hand.

They loved her on that Southern shore :
Tall fisher men and dark-haired boys
Were fain to linger round her door
With shells and kindred ocean toys.

Yet was their love restrained by fear,
So still she was, so calm and pale,
She seemed a star, remotely dear,
No human love might dare assail.

Whilst in her chamber, small and bright
With sea pinks and blue lavender,
She wondered through the summer night
Why love had never come to her.

Her fancy wandered to the shore
Sunburnt beneath the noonday skies,
Again the fisher lads she saw,
Their willing arms and eager eyes.

Saw their young smiles, whose tender gleams
Held all the love she had not known,
And, blushing in her morning dreams,
Felt their red lips against her own.

But all day long her self-control
Concealed her loneliness too well.
Alas! these barriers of the soul,
So slight, yet so invincible!

Time passed: her azure eyes grew sad,
Dull sorrow dimmed their dancing blue,
While many a pensive fisher lad
Envied the seagulls as they flew.

Envied them their sweet liberty,
Free of the ocean, free to love,
On light untrammelled wings, while he
As well might woo the stars above

As the young maiden of his choice.
Her gentle beauty bloomed in vain,
She knew no art, he found no voice
To bridge the gulf between them twain.

How should a fisher lad aspire
To win a thing as fair as this?
So after days of dumb desire
Some duskier maiden claimed his kiss.

And day by day the ripples broke
Around the fishers in the bay.
Night after night alone she woke
Till all her youth had passed away.

The swift sweet years when she was young,
Her golden years, slipped lightly past,
And thus the song remained unsung,
The rose ungathered till the last.

The Date-garden

I DREAMT last night you were mine indeed,
And I prayed the dream to stay,
But this world of ours with reckless haste
Rushed on to another day.

I thought we slept on the Desert sands,
Where the old date-gardens lie,
And a golden mist of quivering stars
Was scattered across the sky.

There, in the limitless silences,
Where only the jackals live,
You were kind to me as you are not kind,
And gave what you will not give.

And when the hands were fallen apart,
And the longing lips grown loth,
A little wind from under the stars
Came down and caressed us both.

Then, leaning against your heart, I said
Ah, it were a lovely thing
If from this blossoming time of ours
Some flower of life should spring.

And though mankind, with its narrow sight,
Might christen it child of shame,
The people's heart, which is always true,
Would give it a sweeter name.

"Love-child": name that is tender with love;
With joyous passion and youth.
Man's own sad laws have blinded his eyes,
But some of us see the truth!

If mine own hand had written my fate,
I know I had rather been
Fruit of a wild and exquisite love
Than the child of dull routine.

Should I not give to children of yours
Created in sheer delight,
The cool clear soul of this star-lit waste,
The peace of the Desert night?

And all our fervour and youth and force,
Would they not feel the same?
Surely the torch of life should be lit
At the whitest heat of the flame!

Lean back, lean back, till your loosened hair
Lies soft on the Desert sands,
That all yourself may abandoned be
To my reverent lips and hands.

When first I saw you, My Well-Beloved,
In my secret heart I said,
Ah, that the lips might follow the eyes
And feast where these have fed!

And now that thine own have set mine free
(Be still, O, my heart, be still)
I only fear that my life may wane
Before they have had their will.

Thus I spoke in the visions of night,
As I may not speak by day,
But the cruel hours with reckless speed
Have carried my dream away.

The night is over, the stars have paled,
The magic of sleep has flown,
The white-eyed Day, slipping into the world,
Found me, as ever, alone.

Trees of Wharncliffe House

Oh, green and leafy Wharncliffe trees
That tremble to and fro,
You rustle in the languid breeze
And catch the evening glow.
Across the dusty gloomy street,
I note your tender sheen,
But unto me it is not sweet,
Who see what I have seen.

The slender Coco palms I crave
Beside a purple sea,
Where every phosphorescent wave
Leaps up in ecstasy,
Towards the tangled stars above
That sparkle in the blue,
These are the things I know and love.
How can I care for you?

I always feel a sense of loss
If, at the close of day,
I cannot see the Southern Cross
Break through the gathered grey,

Nor watch the liquid moonlight gleam
Among the temples white,
And realise that lovely dream,
We call an Eastern night.

Though I, impatient of the heat,
Forth from the window lean
To cool my sight across the street
Amidst your shaded green,
Your leaves, refreshed by summer showers,
Are naught to me, who feast
My fancy on those other flowers
That burn about the East.

For I have seen the Lotus bloom
On lakes like inland seas,
And white Magnolias, through the gloom,
Moonlike among the trees.
Have watched the pale Tuberose, aglow
With phosphorescent light,
And Water-lilies lying low
On sacred tanks at night.

Have wandered where the Moghra flowers
Exhale their scent at noon,
And dreamt sweet dreams where Jasmin bowers
Grow white beneath the moon.
Have seen the Poppies' crimson wave
O'erflow the land for miles
And Roses, on an Eastern grave
Turn even Death to smiles.

By night, my fancy spreads her wings
In visions that console,
But all day long, remembered things
Are dragging at my soul.
I want the silver on the sea,
The surf along the shore,
The ruined Mosque, whose weeds grow free,
Where Princes prayed of yore.

I want the lonely, level sands
Stretched out beneath the sun,
The sadness of the old, old lands,
Whose destiny is done,
The glory and the grace, that cling
About the mountain crest
Where tombs of many a faithless king
Guard, faithfully, their rest.

Not lightly would I speak of Love,
Or estimate his power,
But every star that wheels above,
And each enamelled flower
That sends persuasive influence
To touch the human mind,
Appeals to some strange, inner sense
That Love can never find.

Love always needs his ally, Youth,
Or lost is all his charm ;
A sunset is a golden truth
Nor age nor ill can harm.

And loveliness will lend the earth
Its radiance and sheen
If but one rosebud come to birth,
One single leaf grow green.

Ah, waving trees of Wharncliffe House,
That tremble to and fro,
Old dreams and fancies you arouse,
Old fires you set aglow.
Your shaded greenness soothes the eye,
Worn out with dusty hours,
But still I crave that Eastern sky,
Those brilliant Orient flowers!

All Farewells should be gently spoken

Ay, smooth your hair for another lover,
Refold the satin, restring the pearls,
Lest those who will take my place discover
Discoloured tints and dishevelled curls.

Lift up those delicate lips that mine
Reddened with kisses but yesterday,
Let others drink the dregs of the wine
We two have tasted and flung away.

I wish you well ; go gather the gold,
The little triumphs you hold so dear,
For you the pasture, the sheltered fold :
Ways smoothed by custom and fenced by fear.

You could not have lived aloof, afar
In golden deserts, by lonely streams,
Be rich, be courted, be all you are,
But seek not silence, nor love nor dreams.

Yet what am I that my song should shame you,
What strength have I, that I call you weak ?
Ah, Love alone has the right to blame you
And He is a God and will not speak.

One thing there is yet to be glad of; Fate
In making us one has not left us three.
No child shall inherit our love's estate
To be false like you or forlorn like me.

What if your sweet and treacherous eyes
Had smiled at me from a child of mine
Your delicate lips, so apt at lies,
Lived and laughed, a perpetual sign

Of fitful passion and frenzied hours
That now are utterly passed away,
Dead and forgotten as last year's flowers
And all sweet things that have had their day.

Yet, last farewells should be gently spoken,
And times of pleasure let no man grudge.
Of things once loved, though his heart be broken,
A lover has never the right to judge.

Garden Song

Forgive me, in that I kissed your lips
Too fiercely or too soon;
It was the fault of the nightingale
Singing against the moon.
If Reason swerved in a brief eclipse
The while I sinned my sin,
Opposed to Love, it must always fail
Since Love must always win.

The flowers rejoiced in that kiss of ours,
Even as they were fain
The great night moths should ravage their hearts,
Seeking for golden gain:
Bringing them pollen from other flowers,
Set open through the night
To play their motionless, mystic parts
In Nature's marriage rite.

And who was I, to resist, withstand
That charm of fragrant gloom?
A summer night has a thousand powers
Of scent and stars and bloom

Forgive me, in that my errant hand
Caressed your silken hair,
Oh lay the blame on the Orange flowers,
You *know* how sweet they were!

The Match-maker

Many are loved, but few indeed adored
With the devotion paid to thee, O Lord.
She bids me steal the tassel of thy sword,
Thinking of love.

That she may fasten it above her bed,
Thus will some subtle sense of thee be shed,
When the wind blows across its gold and red.
Fancy of love!

Further, she bade me say these words to thee;
"Downcast and long although my lashes be,
Thine eyes have burnt into the heart of me."
Language of love!

"Mimosa wood, though on the threshold laid
And subject unto passing footsteps made,
Can still send forth fresh shootlets, unafraid."
Fable of love?

"Such is the tree's innate vitality.
And if my heart were trampled down by thee,
Still would new shoots of love arise from me!"
Fervour of love!

As waits the sacrifice upon the pyre,
Fearing, yet longing for, the sacred fire,
Her beauty craves the flame of thy desire,
Master of love.

There is an island in the Southern Sea,
Where maidens, when they children cease to be
With Festivals of Laughter are set free.
Island of love.

Set free to love ; none hinder them nor chide,
Laughing, they call their lovers to their side,
Laughing, their lovers leave them, satisfied,
Joyous with love.

Go thou to her, such laughter will be thine.
And when her arms about thy youth entwine,
Thou wilt be grateful for these words of mine,
Message of love.

I leave thee, Lord, and if thou shouldst consent,
And thus thy gracious life with hers be blent,
Remember in the days of thy content,
This slave of love.

Vain-Glory

If you feel, in the Chaos of Things,
Life is somewhat a sorrowful jest,
Come to the shadow of Love's soft wings,
To starlit silence and dreams and rest.
Leaving the glory, the pomp, the power,
Fame and fortune and folly and fret,
The Western sun is a golden flower!
Come to love, come to forget!

Turn your tender and radiant eyes,
Eyes like amethysts, jewelled and clear,
What do they see in the world to prize,
Which of its baubles would they hold dear?
Vain are the glories, every one,
Vain to conquer and vain to regret;—
The falling shadows engulf the sun,
Come to love, come to forget!

The Flag of Glory is quickly furled,
The Sword of Honour is hardly more;
To those who wander about the world
The standards vary; one is not sure.

One's drifting soul, in Life's ebb and flow,
Would fain be faithful to some things yet,
But youth is calling, the sun is low,
Come to love, come to forget!

From shade of sorrow or stress of strife,
Here, in the desert, how far one seems.
Oh, follow your fancy, lend your life
To the golden guidance of your dreams!
And come to me: you are free to go
Ere ever the stars of morning set;—
The fires of sunset are burning low,
Come to love, come to forget!

Worth while

I ASKED of my desolate shipwrecked soul
"Wouldst thou rather never have met
The one whom thou lovedst beyond control
And whom thou adorest yet?"

Back from the senses, the heart, the brain,
Came the answer swiftly thrown,
"What matter the price? we would pay it again,
We have had, we have loved, we have known!"

Invitation to the Jungle

The Jungle gloom is dim and cool,
And, even through the noonday heat,
Among the reeds beside the pool
The silent air is freshly sweet.

Though desert winds, sand-laden, pass,
And all the tree-tops bend and sigh,
No breezes stir the flower-filled grass
Beside the lake where we shall lie.

We shall not hear the Temple bells,
The tom-tom's sad insistent beat,
The far Bazaar, whose murmur swells
With eager cries and restless feet.

We shall not know the myriad cares
That make the Home's soft tyranny,
And all the Temple's lip-worn prayers,
Its ordered gifts, will pass us by.

Those lip-worn prayers; whose sense is lost
Effaced by long and tearful use,
By thousands daily skywards tost,
While still the God's reject,—refuse,—

Let others pay the reverence due
With waving lights and sacred flowers.
I pray no more except to you,
My faith is in this love of ours.

And I shall twine the Kuskus grass
To shield the thing I hold so dear.
What if the fierce-eyed Panthers pass?
I know their ways and have no fear.

The jungle is my native land
And love shall smooth its paths for you:
Ah, could I make you understand,
How well it is, this thing you do.

You leave the world, and passing by
Its tarnished gold and futile strife,
Gain freedom, love, the open sky,
The flowers upon the Tree of Life!

The Sinjib Tree

I AM the flowery Sinjib tree,
The sweetest thing in the world,
With silvery leaves on a rugged stem
And golden bugs incurled.
Oh, traveller, turn thy face to me
Ere ever thy tent be furled.

Bring here the maiden of thy desire
In my scented shade to rest,
And be she cold as bitterest snow
On Takht-i-Suliman's crest,
Yet she shall open her arms to thee
And entreat to be caressed.

And she shall crave for thy love and thee,
Who was erst so coldly calm,
For the subtle scents of my honeyed flowers
Shall soothe her like a charm,
Till she shall long for a child of thine
To nestle within her arm.

For I am the Flower of Khorassan,
The silvery Sinjib tree,
And he who pitches his camp beneath
Shall dream of love and of me,
As my scented breath steals through the tent
To enhance his ecstasy!

The Outlaw

Worn we lie on the shimmering sand,
Well quit of the world and free.
The scent of the flowers that bloom inland
Is wafted over the sea.

I lean on your shoulder, round and bare,
As soft as a ripened peach,
And watch the weed, like a woman's hair,
Drift up on the curving beach.

Twilight falls on the violet hills,—
On silver surf at their feet,—
From groves of Orange a wild bird trills
Songs that are cruelly sweet,—

Lilac and lemon and rose and grey
Lie soft on the dimpled waves,—
The golden tribute of parting day
Is laid on the Moorish graves.

The lonely dead, who are dispossessed:
A Minaret marks their Creed,
Grim cactus hedges enshrine their rest,
What need, my brothers, what need?

They faced the curses and cares of Life,
And how should they fear in Death
The howls of the hoarse hyenas' strife,
Their carrion tainted breath ?

Nay, Well-beloved, why shudder and thrill,
When that graveyard meets your view ?
Gardens or Rest, or Death if you will,
Are closed for awhile to you.

Safe in your youth, which is my reproach ;
I take it to stifle pain,
As men repel the waves that encroach
From stress of the outer Main.

Building a dyke, or a strong sea-wall,
But if this they fail to do,
Collecting wreckage, things slight and small,
For these have their value too.

As massed together in heaps they lie
Resisting the rising tide
And slowly, surely, the waves defy,—
The builders are satisfied.

Thus have I taken your sixteen years
To ward my sorrow away,
And your young eyes that have known no tears
Look gaily over the bay

Towards the country of sober skies,
The land of the sullen sea,
Where dwell the azure, disdainful eyes
That never had light for me.

Many the rules in the stressful North!
And wearier most than wise;
But though I wandered away, came forth
From under those clouded skies.

Two laws are fixed, as the stars above,
For every race and clime;
One is the cruel Sweetness of Love
And one the Shortness of Time!

Ah, Well-beloved, though I may not spend
The best of my soul on you,
Ask of me as you would of a friend,
All that I can I will do.

For now that none have the right to say
"This thing is not meet for thee,"
I take what happiness drifts my way
Well quit of the world and free.

Return!

Serene and slender, and more than ivory white;
Whose Sphynx-like riddle it never was mine to read,
I implore Thee, by all our moments of past delight,
Have pity! Take heed!

How long, Oh, Lord, this crucifixion of me,
Whose whole soul faints for a word,—for a single touch?
Oh, Thou, whom I seek through Thy sinister mystery,
And, understanding so little, desire so much,
Have pity on me!

Thy hair was gold, the pale, dim gold of the North,
Thy weary attitudes quiet in graceful rest,
But Thy tortured and desperate soul looked wildly forth,—
Through the eyes of a haunted man, distraught, distressed,
By sorrow or wrath.

I would rather share Thy hell, that I dimly guess,
Than any alien heaven unknown of Thee.
Oh out of Thine own despair, Beloved, heed my distress,
And return to me!

Philosophy of Morning

SLAVE

"Ay, he is fair, yet not indeed so fair
As thou transfigurest him
In thine own eyes, clear as the morning air.

"Ay, he is strong and lithe, yet not in truth
As thou rememberest him,
'Tis the intoxication of thy youth!

"Mistress of mine, for once let truth be told,
These lovers are less lovely than they seem,
'Tis love, who subtly turns their brass to gold
With the alluring magic of a dream."

PRINCESS

"Thy chatter, girl, is like a nest of jays!
Disturb me not with jangling coffee trays!
Reclose the lattice and shut out the light
I have no haste to end the peace of night.

(*Sings*) "He whom I love is like a lonely tower
Lit by the sunlight of a great renown,
Aspiring skyward in unconscious power
Above the dust and clamour of the town.

"The West wind fanned the battlemented crest,
And, in the frolic of an idle hour,
Left a light seed among the stones to rest
Which later bloomed a scented golden flower.

"Oh, Seomar, so much desired of me,
Lovely and lone and lofty as thou art,
May it be written in my fate's decree
To plant love's golden flower against thy heart!

"And if love be the dream thou sayst it is
What matter? so it bring that face of his
Near unto mine, and longing find relief.
I care not if the dream be true or no
So it be not too brief!"

SLAVE

"'Tis ever so!
And still the young waste in Love's fitful flame
The force that else had brought them gold and fame."

PRINCESS

"Didst thou not tell me of one who bought thy youth
How that his age hindered his pleasure in thee?
Spite of his gold, gained without pity or ruth
His uncut emeralds and pearls of the sea.

"And what of him who headed the tribes last year
Against the Sultan? When he had lost the game,
Blinded and burnt, and broken with pain and fear,
Cared he then for the passing Mirage of Fame?"

SLAVE

"Truly, men gain not much for all their strife!"

PRINCESS

"There are some chapters in the book of life
Pages, whose print demands the morning light,
That youth alone can understand aright.
These I would read while time is with me still
Let after happenings be what they will.
For this I hold, that when a woman lies
Watching her beauty fire her lover's eyes
While the lithe strength, she worshipped from afar,
Melts in her arms and quivers on her breast,
She knows the utmost sense of joy and rest
That fate has given to this luckless star
Men call the world.

"And though the dream may fade,
Passing away, as sunshine into shade,
Memories of its light will still assuage
The weariness that haunts the after age.

"So shall she see the fire in other's eyes,
Hear the quick questions and the low replies,
And these shall not disturb her inward rest,
Since, in her spring she also knew the best.

"But those who let the days of youth drift by,
Scorning to share a lover's ecstasy,
They shall lament, when all their youth has flown
Most bitterly, because they have not known.

"Ah, close the lattice, leave me to my dreams,
Shut out the brightness of the morning beams,
Let me return, to night where silence is
And the worn beauty of that face of his."

The Slave

In purple haze the sun has set,
A tuft of palms, a Minaret,
Rise clear against the sky.
The silence of the scented air
Stirs to a sense of evening prayer
At the Muezzin's cry.

What care have I, that yesterday
I led thee as a slave away
From Maroc's market-place?
Are we not all the slaves of love?
The very stars that wheel above
Are bound by time and space!

I struck the fetters from thy hands
Only to forge thee stronger bands;
Leastways, 'twas my desire
To hold thy captive soul to me,
Even as mine is chained to thee,
By links of passionate fire.

I want thee for thy beauty's sake,
Though naught, as owner, will I take;
Thou art entirely free.
Yet, if thy gaze of sombre fire
Find aught in me to wake desire
Then give thyself to me!

The Seasons

Youth

Would God, that I could love thee less!
My days are lost in dreams of thee.
I do my work in weariness,
Till kindly twilight sets me free.

Throughout the night thy beauty burns,
The more possessed, the more desired.
Until another day returns
To find me desperately tired.

Middle Age

Ah, me, that I could love thee more!
I know thee kind; I see thee fair,
Why can I not, as oft of yore,
In soft caresses lose my care?

At times life's dragging afternoon
Is quickened by thy morning charms;
I seek thee, but alas! I soon
Forget thee, even in thine arms!

Age

These lovers! Who can understand
    Their vivid joy, their wild despair?
He does but live to kiss her hand,
    And she would die to touch his hair!

Love is an enemy to Rest,
    Which surely is Life's dearest good,
Yet, something stirs within my breast
    And murmurs, "Once you understood!"

Devotion of Aziz to Mir Khan

MIR KHAN

"AND now, Aziz, I take my leave of thee."

AZIZ

"Farewell, Mir Khan."

MIR KHAN

"Hast thou no more to say?"

AZIZ

"I, saying farewell to thee, take leave of all."

MIR KHAN

"Thou knowest, Aziz, I shall return to thee.
I do but leave thee now, at thy command."

AZIZ

"Ay, at my prayer."

MIR KHAN

"Indeed I shall return
Ere the fifth sunset gild these barren hills.
I would have stayed with thee ; have stayed alone,
Did I not feel the truth of all thy words,
How that my name entails a greater risk
Than thine my foster-brother, yet I go
Somewhat in doubt——"

AZIZ

"I have no doubt at all
Only go quickly, lest my heart should break!"

MIR KHAN

"See, now, Aziz, it is but as thou sayest,
If I should stay, they will imprison me,
And hold me long, knowing my father's name
Makes me a hostage, worthy to be held,
Whilst thee they will not——"

AZIZ

"Me they will not hold."

MIR KHAN

"What dost thou murmur?"

AZIZ

"Nothing. Go, Mir Khan.
The last faint light has left the lilac hills,

And thou shouldst start. Even disguised as now
In the disfiguring raiment of a slave,
Thy beauty shines like evening stars, ablaze
Through dusky mists that but enhance their glow
Walk warily, Mir Khan, and hide thine eyes,
Lest women see, and passion shipwreck thee
Ere thou hast reached thy fort——"

MIR KHAN

"Whence I return
With a picked squadron to deliver thee."

AZIZ

"Why dost thou hesitate?"

MIR KHAN

"Farewells are sad,
And—there is something in thine eyes, Aziz,
Dost thou?—thou canst not—doubt of my return?"

AZIZ

"I doubt thee not, Mir Khan. Another star
Has risen above the purple mountain crest,
Thou shouldst be gone."

MIR KHAN

"Believe me——"

Aziz

"I believe.
Indeed I know. Thine inmost secret thoughts
Are mine, were always mine. Ah, try me not,
Leave me, whilst I can bid thee leave me. Go,
Lest I implore thee, 'Stay and die with me!'"

Mir Khan

"Die? But thou diest not! I had not changed
My state and garments with thee, had a thought
Of death to thee, or even the chance of death,
Glanced on my mind. Nay, then, I stay, Aziz."

Aziz

"There is no risk. Thou art so much to me
Even a five days' parting moves me so,—
Breaks up my courage, till I hardly heed
What words I say. Go now. Thou art Aziz,
Aziz, the slave, remember, not Mir Khan,
Beloved of women, and ever in their snares,
Even as now."

Mir Khan

"Take thou my opium."

Aziz

"Nay, thou willst need it in the mountain pass;
I have my own."

MIR KHAN

"Thine own was given to me
Long since thou knowest."

AZIZ

"I tell thee I want it not!"

MIR KHAN

"Well, as thou willst, Aziz, farewell."

AZIZ

"Farewell."

. . . . .

AZIZ

"Ah, thou art gone indeed. Mir Khan, Mir Khan,
Return to me, return! I am lost! I am dead!
Is that the sound of his returning feet?
Nay, it is but a stone, his horse's hoof
Sets leaping down the hillside. Oh, Mir Khan,
Thou art gone from me, and my life is gone with thee!

"Ay, thou hast gone, and left me to my fate,
Knowing I knew thou knewest. For thou didst know.
Last midnight, when Sher Afzul came to me
And told me the Shah-Zada had decreed
That thou shouldst die, for that light love of thine
Amongst his women, also he made known

Thou hadst arranged to change with me, to say
'Stay thou Aziz, while I, Mir Khan, return
To bring thee speedy succour from the fort.
And if they find that thou art but Aziz,
Aziz, the slave, and not the lord Mir Khan,
They will not wrong thee, will not torture thee
As they would torture me, the son of kings.'

"Further, Sher Afzul said thou, smiling, spak'st
Saying, 'He loves me so, he will remain,
Even with certain death confronting him.'

"Ay, but thou knew'st me well. He *will* remain!
There was no need of any speech of thine
To bid me stay. Am I not thine indeed
For life or death? Oh, I am glad, Mir Khan!
Glad that thou givest me this exquisite gift
Even the gift of death,—death for thy sake.

"Thy beauty was ever a perfect thing to me,
Gracious and free; to see thy luminous eyes
Lit with the longing of thine ardent soul,
Ablaze, like golden suns, in love or war,
To touch thy feet, setting thy stirrup-irons,
Or rest my lips upon thy drinking-cup,
These were the joys of Aziz, serving thee,
Living unnoticed with thee, in thy tents.

"Women have loved me, even me, Mir Khan,
Not with the adoration given to thee,
But with kind words, and gentle ways, that fell
On my worn heart as rain on dusty flowers,—

Perhaps it was pity, not love ; I do not know.
But this devotion that I have for thee,
This is another thing ; I have no words
To tell thee what thou knewest and didst not heed.
Why shouldst thou heed ? What could I do for thee,
To whom the whole world is willing to give its all
Holding that all less than the sight of thee ?

"When at to-morrow's dawn they torture me,
Burning my eyes, I shall remember thine,
The luminous circles of light I so adored.
And when they crush my limbs, I shall find peace
Knowing that thine, safe in the distant fort,
Amongst thy household rest in licit love.

"How I have envied them the things they did !
The women who loved thee, and were loved by thee.
Envied their jewelled hands the right to play
In that soft hair of thine, their little teeth
The law they allowed themselves to cling and bite
Thy rounded shoulder, I, who was naught to thee,
Set to prepare the couch, to smooth the quilt——

"Once I remember, crouched against thy tent,
I sought for warmth (thou wouldst have pardoned me
So cold it was that night) and heard her speak,—
Her, who beside thee, tranced in pleasure, lay,
Saying, 'It is not for thy beauty's sake
That I desire thee so, but for thy fame,
Sweeping aside thine enemies, as leaves
Are blown by autumn gusts,' and thy reply
Was 'Ah, Delight, art thou so sure of this ?

Wouldst thou have sought and loved me had I been
Ill-favoured, say, as my poor slave, Aziz ?'

" Ah, poor indeed ! I heard nor cared no more,
Shivering in my furs upon the snow,
Not from the cold, but from the icy pangs
Of pain that will be with me till I die.
Truly, to-morrow's torments will not be
Crueller than these memories of mine.
The heated irons, the flesh-dividing steel,
Are they not gifts from thee, my well-beloved ?

" Ah, when they lead me out, beyond the walls,
I shall look forth, across the rosy hills
Knowing that far beyond their lilac rims
Thou wilt awake, in all thy beauty's pride,
Safe and beloved, already forgetful of me,
Whose lonely and smouldering life has broken at last
Into this passionate flame of death. Mir—Khan——"

The Purple Dusk

Since the white day must dawn again so soon,
And early love is diffident and shy,
Oh, charitable clouds conceal the moon
Grant the indulgence of an unstarred sky!

Ah, silver surf, abreak along the shore,
Cease for awhile thy restless ebb and flow.
The silence trembles with thy sullen roar
And the soft voice I love is very low.

Wind of the Desert, leave the Orange flowers
To spill their sweetness over sand and sea,
Come, all unperfumed, to this couch of ours;
Blow through his curls and bring their scent to me.

Ah, Time, who brought this treasure to my breast,
Knowing so well that cruelty of thine,
I would die now, and leave thee at thy best,
Ere thou hast torn my lover's lips from mine.

Hamlili, the Sultan of Song

Alas, for the fate of Hamlili,
The slender fanatical singer,
Whose fingers were skilled on the ginbri;
    Who played the tears into men's eyes.
Who harped on men's hearts till they quivered
And swayed on the border of madness,
Vibrating and twisting in passion:
    Hamlili: the Singer of Sighs:

Hamlili: Beloved in the Soko:
Whose song was as rest to the weary.
As Lips of the Loved to the Lover.
    Hamlili: Assuager of Care.
Whose tears clustered thick on his lashes.
As, torn from the heart of the ginbri,
The music, caressive and tender,
    Arose in the tremulous air.

They took him, the victim of slander,
And burnt out his eyes in the Kasbah,
They cut off the hand of Hamlili,
    The hand that was Lord of the Strings,

Whose slender and delicate fingers,
Persuaded the lute as a lover
Persuadeth the heart of his mistress
To tender and passionate things.

Ah, none will now pause in the Market,
To hear in the twilight of springtime,
When flowers that bloom in the country,
Have scented the heart of the town,
The songs of that Sultan of Singers,
We called the Caresser of Lutestrings,
Who lies in the gloom of the Kasbah,
Whose lute is for ever laid down.

Love is the Symbol of a Sacred Thing

Who scans his pedigree, nor shrinks to trace
Some link unlawful? Yet he had not been
Had this illicit love not taken place,
Or that forbidden face remained unseen.

They who say *any* love is coarse or light,—
Even the brief caresses of an hour,
The careless kisses of a summer night,—
Condemn the root, not knowing of the flower.

When graceless actions of some casual twain,
Seem but the surge of Youth, the heat of Wine,
His search for Pleasure, or her hope of Gain,
May be the vassals of some vast design.

For who can tell what life may come to birth,
Prophet or Captain of the time to be
As from light seed, flung on the careless Earth
Breaks forth a flower, that scented mystery.

And though from an embrace no fruit may spring
Or from a kiss no spark be kindled, still
Love is the Symbol of a sacred thing,
Through which the Unseen Powers work their Will.

Those Unknown Gods, who move behind a veil
No mortal sense may ever hope to lift;
We only know they falter not nor fail,
And they have granted us one lovely gift.

This Gift of Love, which we condemn, despise
Bending it to the baseness of our will.
Yet in the lowest depths that passion lies
It surely keeps some heaven-born fragrance still.

Therefore, O, you, who find the Perfect Way,
Scorn not the lesser, lighter loves you see,
Unworthy though they seem, yet who shall say
Fate works not through them, for the Days to Be?

Istar-i-Sahara

Dim in the east the ruined city lies,
Purple, against the paler purple skies,
And slender palms and minarets arise,
Into the night.

The sands are soft; by desert winds caressed
Into a thousand ripples. Let us rest
And watch the flaming scarlet of the west
Fade into night.

The pale pink Persian rose is like thy mouth,
Thy breath is sweet as breezes from the south
To weary lands repining in the drouth
Long days and nights.

I too have waited, parched and worn with pain,
Come and refresh me, as the gracious rain
Falls on tired fields and makes them green again
Through summer nights.

Ah, how I love thee. Thou art very fair,
Witness the silken softness of thy hair,
And thy calm eyes, clear as the morning air
On mountain heights.

Gloom falls apace, and silence spreads afar,
Give me thy hands, how slim and cool they are.
Lives there such love on any other star
That shines to-night?

Ah, wait awhile, as yet I only care
To lie to leeward and drink in the air
That passes over thee and through thy hair
Bringing delight.

Withdraw thy lips from mine, Insatiate!
Ah, give me time Beloved—thou willst not wait?
Then,—as thou willst, how shall I strive with fate
This night of nights?

Star of the Desert, make me thine indeed,
Though thou shouldst slay me now, I should not heed.
Of future days and nights I have no need
After this night.

My lips live only when they cling to thine
Part them a little as they close on mine,
So I may crush the grape and drink the wine
Of my delight.

If thou hast hurt me? Ah, how should I know?
If this be pain, then always pain me so!
Nay, do not stir, I cannot let thee go
This night of nights!

Justly I worship thee! Thou art divine
Creating thus thy life anew in mine.
Istar-Sahar! give me a child of thine
This night of nights!

Love the Careless

Death one knows, and can meet, and torture and war,
All the varied horrible things of life.

But a lover is so defenceless. He cannot return
An open stab from the one beloved, or a secret thrust,
He has laid down his arms, and can but accept the words
that burn
Into the depth of his soul. What can I do?
Though you shatter trust
And sin in every way that man can sin against Love.
I cannot enter the strife,
Cannot even implore,
Upbraid, reprove,
For I loved, and thrice cursed fool that I am! I love you
still.
All that I had of passion, of power, even of life,
Was laid at your feet. It did not avail me aught.

Does it ever avail?
All that was ever given or done or dared
If the one beloved be unwilling, can only fail.

Yet I know the value of what I have given—of Love.
The silver and gold of the Earth are no bribes for Him,
Nor will He stoop to a lure.

Kings have knelt, imploring, and only heard
On the lips they loved and longed for, reiterate "Nay,"
And the eyes of Beauty itself, perfect and pure
Have wasted useless tears ; grown faded and dim,
And Love the Careless has not cast them a thought.

Still, if you wish to throw love away, throw it away !
If you desire to squander my gifts, do as you will
With values you never comprehended or even knew.

Once I saw the Summer of Love in your eyes,
Therefore to-day my hands are no longer free
I am dumb as the silent skies.

A lover is so defenceless. I only pray
That Fate in the future deal gentlier, Beloved, with you
Than you ever have dealt with me !

Shouldst Thou Consent

Thou knowest, Lord, that my desire
Is to be thine indeed;
Though thou, alas, of love or me
Hast neither note nor need.

Ah, though thou canst not give thyself
My longing to allay,
Yet grant me some small privilege
To take my pain away.

If once thy lips were laid on mine
(Canst thou not spare me this?)
I could enchant myself in dreams
With memories of thy kiss.

What is a small caress to thee?
Given,—forgotten quite,—
But unto me, shouldst thou consent,
An infinite delight!

The Gods who send the sacred flame
Upon the altar pyre
Remain afar, serenely calm
Untroubled by desire.

But the glad worshipper below
Falls faint in ecstasy ;—
Thus would it be, shouldst thou consent
Between thyself and me !

Reminiscence of Maëterlinck's "Life of the Bee"

Oh, for the death of a beautiful, purple bee,
Sailing away to the blue of a limpid sky;
To have yielded up one's life in an ecstasy,
And then, in the very climax of love, to die!

To give oneself completely, once and for ever;
Drink life at its utmost height as one laid it down;
Spend one's soul in the rush of one last endeavour;
And rule supremely in laying aside the crown.

On Deck

Truly the couch is hard to outward seeming,
The vessel sways on the unquiet sea,
Yet what care I? who nightly in my dreaming
Lay your soft hair between the planks and me.

Storms have delayed us, and the cargo, shifted,
Lists us to leeward as the breakers roll,
I had not cared, not even though we drifted
Out to uncharted oceans round the Pole.

There was a Rani once, who long neglected,
Nightly arrayed herself in silk and gold,
Waiting the footsteps, loved and long expected—
Waiting the lover, whom she could not hold.

Once on her wedding night, indeed, he sought her
Once, and once only; then his ardour died.
All sequent evenings of her youth, but brought her
A great desire ever unsatisfied.

Nightly she lay, her tears and jewels gleaming
In the dim silver from the stars above,
Nightly her limbs, unconscious in her dreaming,
Still took the tender attitudes of love.

For twenty years hope lingered, unabated,
Though beauty lost its bloom and youth its fire,
Never there came the step for which she waited,
Never the lover of her heart's desire.

Yet who shall weigh what subtle consolation
Solaced the Rani in her lonely sleep;
When her locked arms in love's divine elation
Held him whom, waking, she had failed to keep.

Thus I, who watch the alien planets gleaming
Over the waters of this restless sea,
Drift back to sleep, and ever in my dreaming
Lay your soft hair between the deck and me.

The Ocean Tramp

WHERE have you been, O wandering soul?
I have journeyed far and wide;
I drift to a home in any port,
Drift out upon any tide.

And what have you lost, O restless soul?
I have left it seemeth me
A bit of my youth in all the ports
That are clustered round the sea.

What have you learned? The stress of the shore,
The deep sea's desperate strife,
Some secret knowledge of men and things
And the undertow of life.

Found you no happiness anywhere
In the countries where you roved?
Once, only once,—a handful of nights,—
With one whom I met and loved.

The Mirrored Stars of Tangier

It was the darkest hour before the dawn,
The orange-scented air was strangely sweet
And stars flashed brilliantly beneath our feet,
Reflected in the level sands, that lay
Lonely and mirror-like, around the Bay.

Lightly we walked on those reflected stars,
Gleaming among the drift and tangled spars
Left by the waves upon that lucent lawn
Whose flowers were planets.

Then ourselves we flung
Down on the soft, wet sand, and all the skies,
Where countless, jewelled constellations hung.
Lay near and lovely to our wistful eyes.

Upon one silver star my lips were pressed;
A vivid gem, than shone in Cassiopea,
No longer far away, and unpossessed,
But close beneath me, tremulously clear.

And I, who love a thing remote and far,
Drew courage from that sand-encircled star.
For, as my lips caressed its silver fire,
So might my arms embrace my Heart's Desire.

At Simrole Tank

"May you be tortured living, burned when dead,
Your camels die, and virtue leave your wife!"
But he, who sat beneath the Peepul, said
"Why wish him more than average human life?"

The Guru's Tale: The Enchanted Night

When falling evening cooled the air,
The Guru, in the twilight dim,
Caressed his Chela's silken hair
And told this tale of love to him.

"Once, on the march to Bikanir,
I, halting by a wayside well,
Beheld a woman drawing near
Who cast on me a magic spell.

"Not hers the beauty, day by day
Soliciting by tender lures,
But that which strikes the heart straightway,
And instant victory ensures.

"She murmured, stretching forth her arms,
Her red, love-thirsty lips apart,
'At sunset,—under yonder palms,—
Come to my garden,—and my heart!'

"Ah, that unending afternoon!
The sun seemed tethered in the sky.
I felt my inmost senses swoon
With my desire's intensity.

"The silver twilight came at length,
I reached the garden cool and sweet,
And all my eager youth and strength
Lay at her small and jewelled feet.

"Three nights we gathered our delight:
I had almost kissed her lips away,
Yet still her eyes, alert and bright,
Resented the invading day.

"Alas, the fourth delirious eve
Ended in terrified surprise:
Her lamp alight she was wont to leave
For love allured her through the eyes.

"This night she cried in passionate pain,
Her heart seemed broken in her breast,
'Thy beauty is too great a strain,
Let us put out the light and rest.'

("Perchance you hold the speech too strong,
Or my recording it, conceit,
Ah, surely one who has lived so long
May own her words were true as sweet.)

"Then I, half rising to obey,
Beheld a strange and terrible sight,
'Take not,' she said, 'thyself away,
For I will quench the offending light.'

"She raised her arm, bejewelled and small,
It lengthened,—stretched across the room,—
Put out the light on the opposite wall,
And then,—diminished in the gloom!

"My pulses stopped, my passion died;
The square, rose-scented chamber ran
To thrice our length, from side to side,
And yet her arm had bridged the span!

"I wrenched myself from her embrace,
And, heeding not her desperate cry
Fled from that strange, enchanted place
As deer before the Cheetah fly.

"Beneath the starlight, cool and clear,
I raced across the sands alone,
And realised in stricken fear
No mortal mistress I had known.

"My spirit told me, as I sped,
Some tortured soul, escaped from hell,
One of the lonely, loveless dead
Had risen and wooed me by the well.

"Ah, Best-Beloved, though Youth be sweet,
He leads us to strange depths and heights.
Now leave me; later we shall meet
For worship with the Circling Lights."

Among the Fuchsias

Call me not to a secret place
When daylight dies away,
Tempt me not with thine eager face
And words thou shouldst not say.
Entice me not with a child of thine,
Ah, God, if such might be,
For surely a man is half divine
Who adds another link to the line
Whose last link none may see.

Call me not to the Lotus lake
That drooping fuchsias hide,
What if my latent youth awake
And will not be denied?
Ah, tempt me not for I am not strong
(Thy mouth is a budded kiss)
My days are empty, my nights are long.
Ah, why is a thing so sweet so wrong
As thy temptation is?

At the Taking of the Fort

"Inayet Kahn, I have no love for thee!"
"When have I asked for love? lie still and learn
Beneath the stars, how I would give thee all."
"But thou art hurting me, thy kisses burn!"

"I shall not hurt thee, if thou willst consent,
Resist me not, thou dost but fire my brain,
Hinder thou canst not; see, I loose thy hands
And in a moment capture them again."

"Ah, thou art cruel!" "I shall be crueller yet!
Wherefore refuse? I am thy destiny.
Millions of years ere ever we were born
It was decreed that I should come to thee.

"Accepting me thou dost accept thy fate,
Since it is written man was born to slay,
Slay and be slain, and women in their turn
Renew the wasted lives that fall away.

"Ah, blame me not, it was not I who made
This sad chaotic world that wounds us so
With life and love and death,—aimless alike——"
"Inayet Kahn! have pity, let me go!"

"For this I slew; for this, I took the fort,—
Crashed through the horrors of the blood-stained fight,
To the cool twilight and thy chill dissent——"
"Never will I be slave to thy delight."

"This knife may mar a beauty that resists,
And spoils my pleasure." "Slay, then, and have done,
Thus there will be no pleasure. Safe in death
I shall escape from thee, Oh, pitiless one!"

"Nay, for thy slender frame would keep its warmth
Quite long enough for me to slake this thirst,
This dear and desperate need I have of thee;
Ah, the desire thou couldst have curbed at first,

"In thy resisting arms has grown so great
I needs must have thy beauty for my own.
Though Destiny decrees that I repel
The only lovely thing my life has known!

"I have lived hardly all my days, God knows;
Little of women's love has come my way;
Strive not with me, thou dost but make me cruel;
I could be tender if thou wouldst obey.

"Ay, with a tenderness beyond all words
Could shed my very soul beneath thy feet,
Lay down the whole of youth for one short hour,
If thou wouldst share that hour and find it sweet.

"I had such dreams about this night with thee :
All through the fight I saw these planets shine.
With each new wound my desperate spirit sobbed
Let me but live to reach this roof of thine !

"And I *have* reached it ; cool the night-wind blows
Against these lips, whose fevered prayers are vain.
My broken ankle, dragging on the stone,
Has pained me not as thy repulses pain.

"Ah, my beloved one ; try to understand ;
Pity this burnt up mouth with one cool kiss,
Thus shalt thou make my madness slave to thee,—
Aie ! then thou wouldst escape ? take this and this ! !
. . . . .

"So it is dead ; the little and lovely thing,
Pinned by my dagger to the earthen floor
Liked a wired flower. Ah, well, I had my way,
The small clenched hands resisted me no more.

"The soft curved lips spoke no repelling words,
I can die now for I am satisfied,
And after death I shall demand no more
Since I have had my heaven before I died.

"Now for my knife ; thou life-long friend of me,
Reluctantly thou leav'st her breast for mine ;
Well,—'tis the sweetest blood that thou hast drawn
Who hast drawn much ; I did my work. Do thine——'

Twilight

Come to me with the earliest star,
Thou shalt not be caressed,
For passion and love shall stand afar
That I may give thee rest.
Tell of thy troubles before we sleep
Of all thy hopes and fears,
And if the telling should make thee weep
Then I will drink thy tears.

The shade shall solace thy soul that grieves,
And I shall shield thine eyes,
With glossy fans of magnolia leaves,
From starlight in the skies,
While all the cares of the angry hosts
That stalk thy soul by day
Between the trees, like wandering ghosts,
Shall softly steal away.

Where shouldst thou slumber, if not with me?
Thy haven is my breast,
I stretch myself as a couch for thee,
To lull thy limbs to rest.

But, Oh, I promise, Lover of mine,
By all the stars above
I will not offer my lips to thine,
Nor weary thee with love!

To Aziz

Ay, thou art fair ; I know that beauty well.
Have I not longed for it as those in Hell
Long for release ?

Thou wouldst be kind to me ? but when I craved
Such kindness in the days it could have saved
Thou didst not cease

To torture me, Aziz, and now that Fate
Has brought me what so long, I so desired,
It is too late,
I am too tired.

In the Vineyards

Lightly I valued my youth, as a trivial bloom,
Shared with the rose in the hedgerows, the peach on the tree,
Till his lips had fallen fiercely on mine in the gloom
Saying they found youth sweet ; then it grew dearer to me.

Ah, my light-hearted youth, that I knew not aright !
(Softly insistent he spoke through the heat of the day)
This, in the vine-hidden heart of a midsummer night,
Was resigned in his forceful arms for ever and aye.

In the African Desert

Ah, but his lightest kiss was more sweet to me
Than any caress of thine, O silver sea!
His arms have held me gentlier e'en than thou,
In thy liquid, green embraces, hold'st me now.

Soft and cool as his breast, is thy foam above,
Even as soft as his ways and words of love.
Yet was his cruelty as the jagged teeth
Of the hungry, lurking rocks that lie beneath.

Over the reef thy ripples are breaking now,
Curled, as the soft, dark clusters around his brow.
Grim as an octopus in its darkened lair,
Ghastly and sinister thoughts lay hidden there.

Pale he was and quiet, with reticent eyes,
Sombre and flecked with gold as the midnight skies.
They whispered the savage blood of desert kings
Ran in his veins and stung him to cruel things.

Maybe; I know not,—care not—against his breast
I found a secret garden of joy and rest.
Yet his desire, though fierce, was a fleeting breath
And mine, alas, is a flame that burns till death.

" Here in my tent is a couch prepared for thee,
Rest thou awhile and slumber, awaiting me."
Kindly he spoke, when the weary march was done
And the camp-smoke rose across the setting sun.

Down I lay in the shadow; I did not see
That cactus thorns were the couch prepared for me.
Ah, the pain of that feverish, endless night,
And the fainting sleep that came with morning light.

Waking I found myself on the soft warm sands,
While he withdrew the thorns with remorseful hands,
Saying, " Forgive me again, and thou shalt rest
To-night, as thou desirest, against my breast."

Strange and sweet were the ways where his fancy trod,
A panther's fierceness linked to dreams of a God,
Passion, wild as the Desert, in strength and power,
Lips as soft and fresh as the touch of a flower.

These were his gifts of atonement through the night.
These, with persuasive words that enhanced delight,
And strange, sad songs and legends, which left his eyes
Aglow with the fire of sombre memories.

One still night, on the breast of a starry sea,
" Row, till I bid thee cease," he ordered me.
The skin wore through, and the paddle ends were red,
Before, when the sunrise came, the word was said.

Yet as the starlight fell on his long, lithe grace,
The vivid and tender beauty of his face,
I could have prayed that the night should never cease
And cursed the rosy morning that brought release.

Over the rocks he would swing me, to and fro,
Where the white surf foamed a thousand feet below,
Would smile and murmur, "I will not loose thee—quite,
This graceless body of mine needs thine to-night."

Locked in his hut, through the ardent heats of June,
He would not allay my thirst, by night or noon,
Saying, "If water and wine be held from thee
More eagerly willst thou drink my lips and me."

He pinned my lower lip to the lip above,
"Lest thou in my absence utter words of love."
With pointed shells he pricked on my breast his name,
"That thou may'st keep the stamp of thy love and shame."

What cared I? In the joy of passion's blindness
Little I recked of kindness or unkindness.
Only now, when he leaves me in lonely peace,
My torment begins because his tortures cease.

Never will any freshness of thine, O sea,
Allay this endless fever alight in me.
He could assuage with his cruel, tender hands,
But alas, he neither heeds nor understands.

The City: Song of Mahomed Akram

Sinning, and sinned against, the City lay,
Burnt by the sun's caresses day by day,
Passive, defenceless, with her latest breath
Conceiving at his pleasure plague and death.

Relentlessly he poured his ardent rays
Into her cloistered courts and secret ways,
While the hot gold he spilt upon the plain
Rose from the furnace of the sands again.

Beneath a sullen sunset, dimly red,
Rent by the lamentations for the dead,
Whose burning-ghats defiled the stagnant air,
The breathless city waited in despair.

Then came the flutter of a sudden breeze,
Fragrant with scents of aromatic trees,
Cool with the magic freshness of the sea,
And the dry maize-leaves shivered restlessly.

The wind went onwards, to the outer gate,
Thrilled with soft pity for the City's fate,
Dispensing coolness, passed the inner wall,
And fanned the lips of those about to fall.

Swept in his freshness through the stifling lane,
Flew through low casements, fluttered forth again,
Winnowed the market-place, whose floor was red,
And lightly smoothed the cereclothes of the dead.

Stole through the women's chambers, close and sweet,
Lifted their clinging silks from face to feet,
Cooled the pale brows that glimmered in the dusk,
Then gained the open faintly tinged with musk.

Entered the prison, soothed the ring-worn wrist,
The deeper wounds of fettered ankles kissed,
Giving the only freedom that was craved ;
Freedom from heat. Thus was the City saved.

His coolness left her fresh as any flower,
And to restrict the sun's relentless power,
He veiled her with soft clouds and bid them stay
Till all the heat-wrought ill should pass away.

I would have asked such aid of thee, had I but dared ;
Thou couldst have done as much for me, hadst thou but cared.

The Jungle Fear

When sunset lights are burning low,
While tents are pitched and camp-fires glow,
Steals o'er us, ere the stars appear,
The furtive sense of Jungle Fear.

For when the dusk is falling fast
Still, as throughout the Ages past,
The stealthy beasts of prey arise
And prowl around with hungry eyes.

Though safe beside the fire I sit
And stretch contented hands to it,
Though all the cheerful camping-ground,
With men and arms, is close around,

I feel the Jungle very near
And shiver with instinctive fear.
For in some hidden cells of me
Stirs the ancestral memory

Of times when from the beasts of prey
At this same hour men slunk away
To seek their caves, and thrilled to hear
The red-eyed Panthers lurking near,

Or the weird, melancholy howl
Of famished packs of Wolves a-prowl.
Long centuries have since passed by
But still these instincts will not die.

And even men in Cities pent,
Who never slept beneath a tent,
Have said that they at twilight feel
The same strange fear across them steal.

Hid in our being, dim and deep,
The terrors of past perils sleep,
A heritage obscure and vast
From Man's unfathomable past.

Each twilight, when the sun burns down
In desert waste, or crowded town,
When shadows fall and night draws near
The dusk brings back the Jungle Fear.

Disloyal

You were more than a Lover to me,—
    Were something sacred, and half divine,—
Akin to Sunset over the Sea,
    To leaves that tremble and stars that shine.

There was not much to attract in me,
    No gift or beauty ; you did not care
Enough to give me fidelity
    Who cared so deeply, and could not share.

Alas, my Temple ! I find the Shrine
    I entered barefoot, with bended head,
To pay that tender homage of mine,
    An open courtyard, where all may tread !

And all men knew it, I hear, but I,
    Who being a trusting fool, it seems,
Went to the Market of Love to buy
    With coins of worship, and faith, and dreams !

Still it is over. Now, to forget !
    I know not whether to choose anew
In hopes of finding loyalty yet,
    Or, fond but faithless, drift on with you.

Loving you lightly, among the rest,—
(Many a little, not greatly one),—
You may be right: I may find it best
To do, henceforward, as you have done.

But ah, for my sweet, lost nights with you,
When had Death been, in the dawning grey,
Price of your beauty and love, I knew
I would have paid, and been glad to pay!

The Court of Pomegranates

THE Rani, decked in silk and pearls,
With Jasmin flowers among her curls,
Said, while the stars grew bright above,
"Draw near, O girls, and speak of love!"

JAI (*the fan-waver*)

"Ah, how shall I tell thee of love, O Queen,
For mine was knotted with hate;
With a dancing-girl he had faithless been
And rendered me desolate.

"He lay in the Tamarind shade at rest,
Where Hunuman's Temple is,
And a little knife crept out of my breast
To bury itself in his!"

TINCHAURYA (*the scent-sprinkler*)

"If Fate should say, 'Thy course is run,'
It would not make me sad;
All that I wished to do is done,
All that I would have, had.
My Lord has left his life with me,
And mine divinely glad!

"They tell me I may be deceived,
I neither care nor know,
A lesser love might well be grieved,
With me it is not so.
My Lord has lain within these arms,
And all the rest may go!"

ONE OF THE DEVA-DASI (*girls dedicated to a Temple*)

"Shrivelled and aged, with never a rest,
I wearily wander from Shrine to Shrine.
But Vishnu is branded across my breast;
The Gods themselves were once lovers of mine!"

LALA (*the door-keeper*)

"I went to him as a willing bride,
He did not use me ill,
A little, perhaps, he broke my pride
Against his reckless will.

"But any sorrowful time of tears
Through which he made me go,
I minded not, for in after years,
I loved his children so!"

YASMINI (*the dancing-girl*)

"I am clothed with the gold and the kisses of men
And, nightly, new love-songs impassion the air;
For awhile I shall dance in the torchlight, and then
Comes darkness; and desolate depths of despair.

"Oh, Daughters of Virtue, to you it is given
To lull with caresses new life at the breast;
By us, in our beauty, unshamed though unshriven,
The Youth of the Nation is firstly possessed."

GULABI (*a slave*)

"The thing we love has endless charms
To while away our discontent;
Men seldom feel the weight of arms,
Or women that of ornament.

"Her hair is softer far than mine,
Her gold-starred teeth more almond white,
Her eyes so often mirror thine,
Small wonder they are always bright!

"Her happiness unmoved I see,
Though I am naught and she is wed,
Because the child thou gavest me
Is living still, and hers is dead!"

THE RANI

"How like we are, how all the same,
We think one thought, we play one game,
Beneath one sceptre bend.
To careless slaves or curtained queens
Love is our most delightful means
To a delightful end."

The Tower of Victory

The starlight night was cool and dim,
Soft clouds beflecked the tranquil sky.
She climbed the hill, and reached with him,
The carven Tower of Victory.

The Tower that rears its lonely head
Above the Jungle, wild and vast,
And dreams, perchance, of warriors dead
Who held the hills in ages past.

Sweet fragrance drifted o'er the land
From Champa trees and Jasmin flowers;
The lovers wandered, hand in hand,
Through long, and all uncounted, hours.

And when the night was mid-way spent
They climbed the dark and broken stair,
Half stifled from the acrid scent
Of countless bats, that harboured there.

The topmost steps had fall'n away,
A time-worn ladder took their place,
Until she felt the night-wind play
In coolness on her upturned face.

At last, they reached the highest stage,
Windswept and open to the stars.
The battlements were worn with age
But waving grasses hid the scars.

The lonely Jungle lay serene,
Beneath the star-bejewelled skies,
They turned them from the silver scene
To seek once more each other's eyes.

But when he caught her to his breast
She shrank in delicate dismay;
So, chilled, he left her uncaressed
And drew his eager arms away.

Her eyes beneath their lashes hid
The tender tears that left them dim,
As down the ladder-rungs he slid
And drew it swiftly after him.

"It must," he cried, "be naught or all;
And I shall come no more to thee
Till from the Tower I hear thee call
To say thou wilt be kind to me!"

"Stay *now*," she begged. He would not heed,
But down the ruined, twisting stair
He crushed his way with reckless speed
And reached the scented outer air.

But when he scarce had left the Tower
He paused, and felt his anger cease,
Such was the magic of the hour
Its lovely mystery and peace.

. . .

Two eyes among the thickets glow ;
A stealthy rustle stirs the air ;
The Tigress springs, and lays him low,
Then bears him, senseless, to her lair.

There was no sound ; he gave no cry ;
The careless stars looked on serene.
The Jungle's sudden tragedy
Remained unheard, unknown, unseen.

While on the Tower, she cried in tears,
" Return to me, Beloved of mine,
Forgive me for my foolish fears
Within those tender arms of thine.

" Oh, Brightest Star of all the night
Come back, and shed thy light on me,
And thou shalt learn, to thy delight,
How more than kind I am to thee!"

In vain she cried, in vain she wept,
At times in solitary woe,
Towards the inner edge she crept
And looked, but dared not leap, below.

Before she died, three weary days
She called in anguish on his name.
By twilight cool, or noonday blaze,
Her luckless lover never came.

And since men rarely mount the stones
That form the Tower's ruined stair,
It may be that her small, white bones
Still wait in lonely silence there.

Ah, when Love comes, his wings are swift,
His ways are full of quick surprise;
'Tis well for those who have the gift
To seize him even as he flies!

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